

Exchange South-Korea

HANYANG UNIVERSITY ERICA CAMPUS

FEB.-JUNE

Rasmus Tonnesen

7wyk2xt8@stud.kea.dk | CONTACT ANDREAS BERGER

Preface

A short report with some experiences gained on exchange in South Korea by Rasmus Tonnesen, age 31, BATCM student at KEA. Covering the basics of his chosen subjects and some of the social and cultural experiences too.

Contents

Introduction	2
Experiences at the host university.....	2
The subjects	2
Global leader training	3
Communication rhetoric	3
Crisis and disaster response communication.....	3
Digital construction management	3
Decision making under uncertainty	3
Survival Korean	3
Social and cultural experiences.....	4
Practical experiences	4
Conclusion.....	5



A snap from the school festival

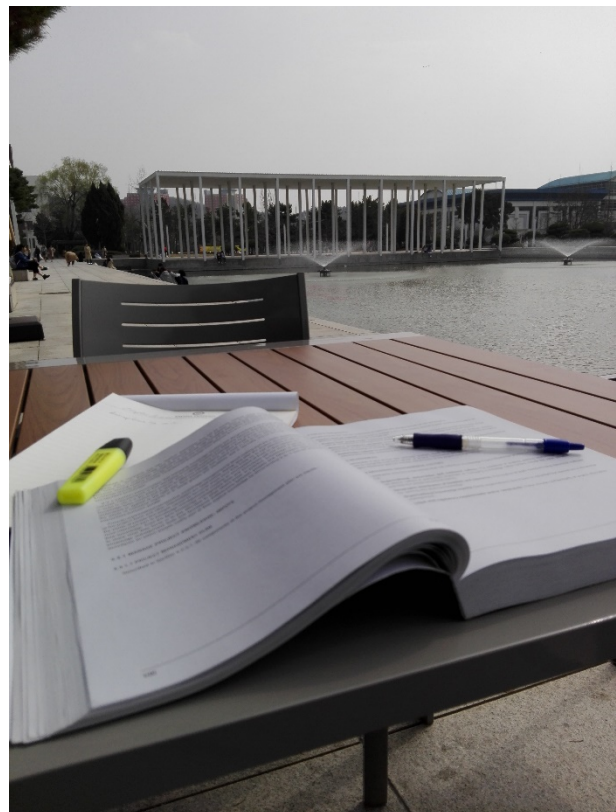
Introduction

I knew early on that I wanted an exchange semester, same reason I choose the international line. Best possible setup for an international career. I chose to go abroad on my 5th semester as I was told the content on 5th semester was refurbishment of an older structure something I have had a great deal of involvement in, in my former job as a carpenter. Figuring this was the semester I could do without the best, this was when I planned to take my semester abroad.

I expected that I would meet a different culture and very different people, and hopefully get an insight to how they deal with the industry of construction. And of course make some friends from around the world, making a network.

Experiences at the host university

As for language of the actual class, some of my fellow exchange students had issues that the classes they choose (English on paper) was taught in Korean. I only had one challenge with mine, Digital Construction Management. I was the only non-native Korean student in the class, and the Koreans were having a tough time understanding the subject in English. The professor arranged a meeting with me and asked if we could make another arrangement, one where I did a self-study and then made a weekly summary for him. This seemed like the best solution for everyone. After the second hand-in he asked me if we could turn it in to some knowledge sharing with some of the Korean students, so it became at presentation of what I had been reading up on. This turned in to being a full session of me presenting the chapter of the week to the professor two of his assistants (Doctors) and 6 senior students, and answering questions and elaborating on further details.



Time spent at the university lake

The rest of the classes was taught at a decent level of English by dedicated teachers/professors.

The subjects

I had started out with 6 subjects: Global Leader Training, Communication Rhetoric, Crisis and Disaster Response Communication, Digital Construction Management, Decision Making under uncertainty and finally Survival Korean.

[Global leader training](#), was taught by a young Korean woman who was very engaged and highly regarded by the native students. We had a lot of in class debates to get the general English level up, and to learn to engage each other without being nervous, not the activity I learned most from. We also had to hand in a resume and a made up job application, and finally a mock job interview, this was good training and forced you to scrutinize yourself and set a certain direction in your mind. Very useful part of this course.

[Communication rhetoric](#), was taught by a funny and engaging young Australian guy. It was as it sounds about some of the basic mechanics of communication. How to agree and disagree in a polite and orderly fashion. Sound very simple and it was! But if you engaged yourself and spent some time on it, it was actually a very good thing to delve into. Fine tuning some of the ways you communicate, and really helping you being conscious about what you say, how you say it and how it might be received by the recipient. Useful for most students regardless of their mayor.

[Crisis and disaster response communication](#), taught by a very dedicated young Korean teacher, who had been in the states teaching at a university there. The focus on this course was how to manage a crisis situation as a PR manager, for me it was not directly related to my mayor, but I feel that many of the methods, approaches and analyses can be altered just a bit and then applied in the construction management environment that I am dealing with in my mayor. It was a course with very mixed teaching methods. A bit of group work, homework in the form of reading for next class, in class debates, group debates, essays a bit of everything. But covering the material very well.

[Digital construction management](#), this was to be my main focus as this was the one that really stated to be something very relevant to my mayor. It turned out to be just that, but in a very different way. This was the course that got changed for an independent study under the professor and me lecturing and answering questions from other students. The professor was amazing, had tremendous knowledge about the industry and was very inspiring. It was not what I expected! But I do not regret this decision regardless.

[Decision making under uncertainty](#), was a very small class, 14 students or so. The professor was a genius at math and really adept at explaining the differences in statistics and probability, elaborating on why it is so important to know the difference and being able to calculate probability and not just read statistics. A genius class that should be mandatory to all making decisions based on numbers!

[Survival Korean](#), was taught by a teacher that was pressed in her English capabilities. The books didn't have proper vocabulary in English only the Korean words, so you had to make your own notes. The subject was focused on what seemed to be kindergarten subjects, learning to say mom and dad and describing family relations is not something I find useful for everyday life in Korea. I wish they had made it more relevant for the students. I quit half way through the semester though, as I was running out of time and was super stressed with all the work from my other classes. But the other students told me I didn't miss out on much. All in all, don't do it! There is a youtube tutorial that will teach you the basic alphabet and then getting to know and use words is done best by hanging out with and talking to the native students.

Social and cultural experiences

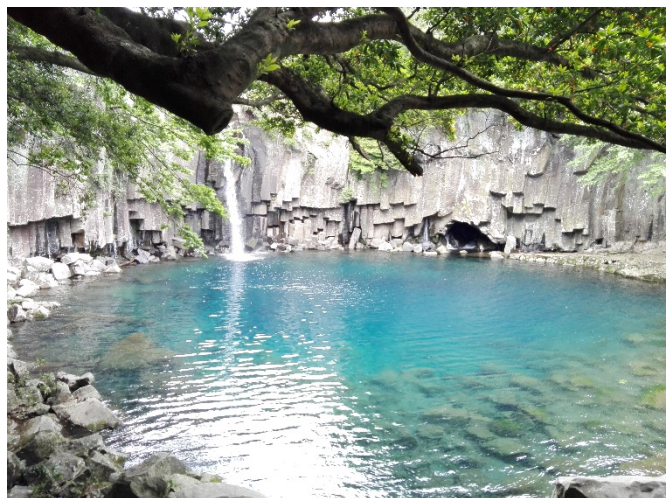
I generally suggest that you should always go for the national museum of whatever country you visit, especially when you are going to stay as long as you are when studying abroad. This really gives you a sense of the history and culture of the place you are going to stay, making it easier to understand some of the basics of what society is built on. On top of that it's free to go to the National Museum of South Korea.



Korea National museum

The Hanyang University has a special group of people called the HanMille staff, these are students that volunteer to be mentors and arrange trips for all the exchange students and make sure that everyone is ok, and can get help for their alien registration and what not! A super good system that make you very comfortable even though you have to navigate a very foreign culture. This is also a platform that enables you to mingle with the local student, so you are not stuck with only the other exchange students.

That being said, you are closer to the exchange students as you live door by door, and even share rooms. This also gives you the opportunity to find likeminded people for some of the small trips you might want to take on the weekends. It's always nice with a travel buddy or two. I made a group of 7 people going to Jeju Island also known as Korean Hawaii, this was a really nice experience and we all saved money as we pinched in to rent a 7 seat car to fit us all.



One of countless waterfalls on Jeju Island

Practical experiences

As South Korea is so far away you will likely have a transit on the way there, I chose to transit through Abu Dhabi and spend 16 hours there driving up the coast to Burj Khalifa and back again. Utilizing your transit is a great start to your exchange. That being said I also suggest going early, so you have at least a few days before the start of the semester, to settle down and find your way around the country before having to find your way around the everyday of school days. Hostels are cheap so don't worry about the price there. Go to agoda.com to find super good deals for Asian hostel, usually half price of hostelworld on the same places.

I spend way too much money on food in the beginning, prices on food is cheap all over compared to Denmark, this meant that I wasn't critical to what I paid in the beginning. After a few days I found the small back alley places that gives you the most authentic food at the best prices. Don't pay more than 9000 Won, and preferably 4-5000, this is the price to aim for! Less than 30 DKK for a meal at a restaurant, what's not to like. If you budget with 15000 won pr. Day you should be good.

Traveling around South Korea is cheap and easy so make sure you use your weekends for small trips around the country. I planned my week so I had Fridays with no classes so I could take longer weekend trips. So the option of taking a weekend to Japan or China is viable to.

You can go to china for 3 – 5 days depending on your destination without a visa, as long as you don't go straight back to Korea. This is done by utilizing their transit visa rules. So going Shanghai then Hong Kong (not china) and then back to Korea, it counts as transit. You cannot go straight back and forth with this option. But it free, no visa fee to be paid so if you plan it right there is money to be saved.

If you are thinking of renting a car before during or after your semester, make sure you have an international drivers license with you! You can get it at the local municipality for only 20 DKK. If you, as me, realize this in Korea, getting it from the embassy it is 400DKK. Hard learned lesson!

Last but definitely not least! Make sure you apply for those scholarships and send those funding applications! I applied for quite a few, even though some of them didn't have deadline until May (towards the end of my semester abroad) I still applied. And I got a good one at the end covering some extra stops on the travel back home. You never know whether you are good for it or not, so don't rely on them. Make sure you have your savings and an agreement with your bank or whatever makes it doable, and then have the funds as money that will make your life sweeter! Worth spending hours on!

Conclusion

I got all that I wanted and more to it as of my cultural and social experience! As for the professional insight to the construction industry in Korea, not so much. But I was very lucky to have the professor from digital construction management, as he was very helpful and willing to provide information on the industry and other related subjects such as space engineering and construction in space. Which have made my focus turn quite a bit.

South Korea has good options for small adventures on the side of the study, both domestic and other nearby countries, make sure you utilize this! (I could have done better if I knew).



Capsule hotel Tokyo

All in all a very giving exchange that I wouldn't change if I had to do it over again. (Maybe focus more on the architectural part) they have some architectural classes that seemed very good. But they were colliding with the digital construction management on the time schedule.